

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Open Access



Peruvian ceviche: cultural heritage of humanity and its socio-cultural significance

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Abstract

Peruvian ceviche is a traditional dish that represents a fusion of fresh ingredients from the sea and the land, as well as an element of relevance to the local economy and social cohesion. In December 2023, UNESCO inscribed the practices and meanings associated with the preparation and consumption of ceviche on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This research aims to explore the socio-cultural significance of ceviche and its impact on Peruvian identity, examining its uses and customs, as well as the passion with which its flavours are preserved. Ceviche is a fundamental practice of Peruvian cultural identity, functioning as a gastronomic product that has led Peru to achieve worldwide recognition in cuisine. The acidic and fresh combination of its ingredients is the key to its appeal, attracting both locals and visitors. It highlights the fusion of ingredients from all regions of the country, which is seen as a reflection of inclusiveness and cultural diversity. This idea is clearly illustrated by ceviche, an emblematic dish with different versions in the coast, highlands and jungle of Peru. Beyond being a traditional dish, it is a symbol of cultural identity that transcends borders and unites the Peruvian people around its preparation and consumption. Its study allows us to understand how gastronomy becomes a vehicle for the preservation and transmission of knowledge, practices and meanings.

Keywords Ceviche, Peruvian gastronomy, Culinary practices, Transmission of ancestral knowledge, Intangible cultural heritage

Introduction

Peruvian ceviche is a historic and traditional dish that represents a fusion of fresh ingredients from the sea and the land [1]. Its recipe has been passed down from generation to generation, standing out not only for its unique taste, but also for its deep cultural significance in Peruvian identity. 'It is prepared with raw fish marinated in lemon, seasoned with chilli and salt, and accompanied by

locally grown produce [2, p.31]. This delicious preparation is enjoyed both in everyday life and on festive occasions, being linked to moments of celebration and social gatherings, especially during the feast of San Pedro, the patron saint of artisanal fishermen [3].

In addition, the richness of the seafood of the Peruvian coastline means that it is prepared all along the Peruvian coast. For this reason, Peruvian ceviche can be prepared at home or sold in traditional places such as cevicherías, where the work of local cooks stands out. The preparation and consumption of this dish involves particular practices, knowledge and meanings at each stage, from fishing to the cultivation of the ingredients. Given that recipes vary between regions, ceviche reinforces local cultural identity, and its knowledge and techniques are transmitted mainly within the family environment, complemented by

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training programmes that promote the proper management of natural resources [3].

In December 2023, the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which met in Kasane, Botswana, from 5 to 8 December 2024, held its 18th session. During this meeting, the Committee examined 56 nomination files, including 45 for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. One of the unanimous decisions was to inscribe the practices and meanings associated with the preparation and consumption of ceviche, a traditional Peruvian dish, on the List. This inclusion recognises ceviche as a key element of Peruvian cultural identity, involving knowledge, techniques and meanings passed down through the generations [3].

Cultural contribution to Peruvian gastronomy: ceviche as a symbol of cultural fusion

With the arrival of the Spanish in Peru, a great deal of controversy was generated in the country; however, their food practices also enriched the gastronomy. Similarly, the Japanese, Italians, Chinese and Africans also contributed much, forming a multicultural nation, resulting in a fusion of flavours and techniques. This mixture of influences allowed for positive changes that are reflected in today's Peruvian gastronomy [4]. Ceviche is one of these fusions. The recipe uses seafood, which is abundant on the coast, as well as lemon, red onion and lettuce; these three foods were brought by the Spaniards, and the recipe is complemented by chilli peppers and local garnishes such as fresh corn or corn kernels, sweet potato, or some leguminous plants such as zarandajas, which are native Peruvian foods, grown throughout the length and breadth of the country. In other words, ceviche is accompanied by local foods according to the regions of the country.

Two pre-Hispanic cultures left a significant mark on the history of Peruvian marine gastronomy: the Mochica and the Chimú. The Mochica culture developed between the first and seventh centuries in the region of La Libertad, while the Chimú flourished from the 10th to the end of the fifteenth century in Lambayeque. Both civilisations, through their ceramics, reflect their relationship with fishing and the hunting of marine mammals. It is also important to mention their mythology, which worshipped the waters of the sea, associating them with fertility and abundance. Their most representative sea gods, Ni and Ai-Apaec, were considered symbols of protection in the ocean [5].

Preservation of ceviche as cultural heritage

Consequently, the preservation and protection of the traditional flavours of ceviche is essential for the conservation of this cultural heritage. Thus, the Ministry of Culture (MINCUL) has created approaches that seek to ensure the practice of these traditions among the younger generations. Each portion of ceviche tells the story of the work done by fishermen and farmers, the relationships between the different actors in the production chain, and for this reason, it is a vital component in local economies and in the construction of national identity. In this way, ceviche goes beyond its gastronomic significance and becomes a representation of the ingenuity and resilience of the Peruvian people, as well as a testimony to the value of its natural resources [2, 5].

In Peru, the Foreign Trade and Tourism Commission of the Peruvian Congress, on 29 March 2023, approved the opinion of Bill 3703, which declares 28 June as National Ceviche Day. The law also provides for promotional activities for the consumption of this dish during the last week of June, as part of the efforts to reactivate tourism through national gastronomy. The aim of this legislative proposal was to reaffirm the Peruvian origin of ceviche and promote its responsible consumption, with the aim of disseminating Peruvian gastronomy internationally and encouraging the export of its ingredients. According to the legislators, it is important to promote the typical products of each region, especially those foods that boost the local economy, giving each tourist destination an identity and distinction. Typical dishes identify localities, give them a cultural aspect and differentiate them from the rest, making tourists recognise the destinations even more [6].

On the other hand, the efforts deployed by the Peruvian Ministry of Culture to get the practice of Peruvian ceviche included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity list have been comprehensive and well-coordinated. Since the creation of a multi-sectoral working group in 2018, composed of representatives from various ministries and cultural experts, the process has involved the meticulous identification of the knowledge, techniques and meanings associated with the preparation and consumption of ceviche throughout the country. This group has conducted nationwide research on productive practices such as artisanal fishing, agriculture and traditional cuisine in order to build a solid dossier for the nomination. After a rigorous evaluation process, the ceviche nomination met all the criteria set by UNESCO and was ready for evaluation. It was commended by the evaluating body, marking a significant step towards the final inscription of this cultural expression on the prestigious world list [1].

Diversity and multiculturalism in Peruvian gastronomy

This gastronomic diversity not only highlights Peru's culinary richness but also fosters a sense of unity and multiculturalism that celebrates the country's heritage and plurality. Each variant of ceviche reflects the creativity and adaptation of communities, showing how cuisine can be a vehicle for identity and belonging. Thus, the ceviche becomes a symbol but also narrates the history and diversity of a country that is enriched through its culinary traditions [7]. In other words, ceviche is an essential part of Peruvian cultural identity, a fact that has led it to achieve worldwide recognition in cuisine. The acidic and fresh combination of its ingredients is the key to its appeal [8].

The narrative around Peruvian cuisine highlights the fusion of ingredients from all regions of the country, which is seen as a reflection of inclusion and cultural diversity [9]. This idea is clearly illustrated by ceviche, an emblematic dish that has different versions in the coast, highlands and jungle of Peru. On the coast, traditional ceviche is prepared with fresh fish marinated in lemon juice, chilli and onion, which is evidence of the richness of the marine resources. In the highlands, ingredients such as trout, corn and potatoes are used, adapting to local products and ancestral techniques. In the jungle, ceviche is transformed with river fish and native flavours, incorporating Amazonian fruits and native chilli peppers.

Traditional knowledge and ancestral practice

The traditional knowledge that has been passed down and shared by ancestral generations is based on experiences and narratives that generate deep meaning. This knowledge is dynamic and alive, adapting to the changing needs of each community, manifesting itself in concrete practices that are manifested in ways of eating, herbal medicine, ceremonies and farming techniques. They also have cultural and spiritual value. This knowledge provides knowledge about the natural environment and practical solutions for everyday life, ranging from food and construction to social organisation and worldview. However, this cultural heritage is constantly evolving and can be threatened by external factors, which calls for its preservation and revitalisation [10].

On the other hand, ancestral preparations of indigenous food are living culture, full of heritage and communication, reflecting the diversity of ethnic groups, their values, knowledge and lifestyles. When tourists enjoy local and indigenous cuisine, such as Peruvian ceviche, they are exploring cultural heritage through the dish. These preparations are unique, group-specific, and have been steadfastly maintained through generations as regional culinary traditions. Anthropologists, historians, scientists and artists have recognised the fundamental

role of food culture as it even communicates the nature of the harvest in the coming season. Indigenous food is a communication tool that identifies a people in a specific time and place, reflecting how they interact, organise and live. In this sense, ancestral preparations are living culture, an invaluable heritage that connects the past with the present and the future [11].

With all these recognitions of Peruvian ceviche, more than an emblematic dish of the country's gastronomy, it is a manifestation of identity and tradition deeply rooted in Peruvian culture. This research aims to explore the socio-cultural significance of ceviche and its impact on Peruvian identity, examining its uses and customs, as well as the passion with which its unique flavours are preserved. In addition, its relevance in the local economy and its contribution to social cohesion will be analysed.

State of the art: previous studies

The state of the art is presented below, starting with the most relevant background information. In Ecuador, Duarte [12] proposes 'to relate the history of ceviche, from its most ancient origins to its current state in Ecuador, and to outline possible future evolutions'. A non-systematic bibliographic review was carried out to trace the routes that ceviche has followed from its most remote ancestors, through time, territories and human movements, to its present-day tables. It is mentioned that *sik-baj*, the oldest ancestor of ceviche, may have originated in the Persian empire (and perhaps Babylon), spread to Europe with the spread of Islam, and then crossed the Atlantic with the conquistadors, where it merged with pre-Inca and Inca preparations in Peru. From there, it spread throughout the Spanish colony. The paper highlights some adaptations of ceviche in Ecuador throughout its evolution and suggests a possible future evolution that would integrate other recipes, techniques and traditions. It concludes that gastronomic traditions often emerge from earlier traditions, that culinary innovation thrives on the meeting of cultures, and that the evolution of dishes and recipes is happening on a permanent basis.

Within the framework of qualitative research, and particularly from the perspective of the ethnographic paradigm, it is essential to approach the study of Peruvian ceviche, recently recognised as Intangible Heritage of Humanity, contextualising it within a The foodstuffs that, over time, UNESCO has declared as intangible cultural heritage are a wider corpus. These foods are not mere gastronomic expressions, but living manifestations of identity and tradition deeply rooted in the culture of each country. Their recognition transcends the culinary sphere, becoming symbols of social cohesion, collective memory and cultural continuity. Thus, ceviche, like other heritage foods, stands as an emblem of Peruvian cultural

wealth, reflecting a historical legacy that has been transmitted and preserved through generations, and continues to be a central element in the construction of national identity.

In that vein, a study in Italy by Moro [13], reports that its aim was to ‘explore the real and mythological genealogy of the Mediterranean Diet (MD) to highlight its cultural, economic and social value.’ The MD was seen as a potential tool for raising awareness and fostering sustainable development, especially in less developed regions. In 2010, UNESCO officially recognised the MD as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, declaring that ‘The Mediterranean diet represents a set of skills, knowledge, practices and traditions that span from the landscape to the table.’ This recognition has had a significant social impact on the seven nations and communities involved. Furthermore, the Mediterranean Diet, whose name derives from the Greek word *diáita*, meaning lifestyle, includes a set of skills, rituals, symbols and traditions that span from the landscape to the table, linked to agriculture, harvesting, fishing, livestock, conservation, processing and cooking in the Mediterranean basin, with a special emphasis on sharing and enjoying food in community.

Over the millennia, the Mediterranean Diet, the result of a constant exchange enriched by internal synergies and external contributions, has been a melting pot of traditions, innovations and creativity that expresses the lifestyle of the communities of the basin, particularly of the seven nations that prompted this nomination, and especially of the communities of Agros, Brač and Hvar, Soria, Koroni/Coroni, Cilento, Chefchaouen and Tavira. For Italians, the Mediterranean Diet is a shared heritage, fundamental to their well-being, which has been passed down from generation to generation, uniting social classes and bringing families and friends together to share moments of healthy pleasure. For these reasons, they consider that the inclusion of the Mediterranean Diet on the prestigious UNESCO List offers a greater guarantee for the preservation of this tradition and, at the same time, strengthens its identity. It can therefore be seen by many people as the ideal place to recognise traditions that unite and enrich seemingly different countries, cultures, religions and community histories [13].

‘Dolma’ is a Turkish dish of Ottoman origin and was also inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on 8 December 2023. This recognition highlights the complexity and cultural value of its preparation, which involves a deep knowledge of culinary practices and traditions. Dolma’ is a mince made with meat, onion, rice, peas and spices, wrapped in vegetable leaves, fresh or boiled, and is also used to stuff fruit and vegetables. This culinary

preparation is associated with celebrations and social gatherings, symbolising feelings of solidarity, respect and hospitality. The safeguarding of the ‘dolma’ is the responsibility of the communities, which carry out various activities to raise awareness of the importance of this cultural heritage. Its transmission takes place mainly at the family level, as well as in vocational training centres and through informal apprenticeship systems [3].

In December 2020, UNESCO recognised the ‘Traditional Practices and Knowledge of Tereré in the Culture of Pohã Ñana’, an ancestral Guaraní drink from Paraguay, by including it on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This designation seeks to highlight the relevance of tereré as a symbol of Paraguayan national unity, promoting intercultural dialogue and diversity at the global level. Furthermore, the consumption of tereré is considered a communal act that fosters trust and social inclusion, without distinction of class, beliefs or gender. This tradition is deeply rooted in Paraguayan cultural identity, allowing people to reconnect with their roots and share ideas in a space of social coexistence [3].

On 13 December 2010, the gastronomic meal of the French was inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. This recognition highlights the cultural, social and traditional importance of this practice in French identity, ensuring its safeguarding and transmission to future generations. French gastronomy is a traditional social practice that celebrates the most important moments in life, such as births, weddings, birthdays, achievements and reunions. It is a festive meal where diners enjoy the art of eating and drinking well, highlighting the importance of feeling at ease together, the pleasure of tasting delicacies and the harmony between human beings and the products of nature [3].

In this sense, Guardia [14] states that recognition by UNESCO not only validates the importance of ancestral knowledge, but also promotes its preservation and transmission to future generations. The inclusion of these practices on the list represents a global effort to safeguard cultural diversity and highlight the value of food traditions as an integral part of the identity of communities. Through this process, it fosters greater appreciation for the richness of traditional cuisines around the world, ensuring that they continue to be a source of pride and social cohesion. In addition, member countries have begun to systematically inscribe cultural elements on the representative list, and the Committee has developed practices and conceptual approaches that have clarified ambiguities present in the early days of the Convention. As of 2019, 16 elements have been registered in this framework.

Importance of the study

The purpose of the study is to sustain an academic approach to contemporary Peruvian cuisine within a framework of growing international recognition. With the incorporation of gastronomy into university curricula, it is important to provide scientific knowledge that facilitates the training of students in this particular discipline. The study addresses the ceviche with the aim of compiling and analysing its origins, its cultural and economic significance, and contributing to the sustenance of professionals who appreciate and protect this legacy.

Ceviche is a cultural emblem that unites Peruvians and contributes to the preservation of their ancestral wisdom. Its examination from a socio-cultural perspective allows the study of its impact on the formation of national identity, social cohesion and local economic development. Moreover, its acceptance as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO reinforces the need to protect its legacy for future generations. This study reflects the importance of ceviche as a symbol of Peru's heritage and helps to deepen the understanding of Peruvian culinary and cultural diversity.

Fundamental historical narrative of ceviche

The following is a narrative of the history of Peruvian ceviche. The first signs of fishing and shellfish gathering on the Peruvian coasts date back approximately 9,000 years or even earlier, as evidenced by the remains of nets and food found in primitive coastal villages. Over time, seafood became a valuable resource for the highland civilizations, and large quantities of dried fish were transported to the mountains to enrich the diets of their inhabitants.[15].

The first chronicle about the diet of the ancient Peruvians dates back to 1534, written by Francisco de Jerez in Seville, who mentions that “they eat meat and fish, all raw; they eat corn cooked and roasted”. Additionally, the chronicler Pedro Gutiérrez de Santa Clara wrote that “the Indians of this coast fish at their leisure, without fear, and all the fish they catch in the river or at sea, they eat raw”, adding that they are very fond of this food, even offering it to the sick as a gift, without it causing them any harm. [15, p. 19].

Similarly, in 1536, the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas mentioned the cultivation and sale of lemons in Peru, as well as how the ancient Peruvians fished and used sardines as fertiliser in agriculture. The chronicler Reginaldo de Lizárraga described that “the coast is abundant with fish, such as mullet, croaker, flounder, and other species”, noting that the indigenous people employed reed rafts along the entire coast. [15, p. 20].

The oldest material record demonstrating the existence of ceviche, a now-world-renowned Peruvian dish, is over two thousand years old, indicating that its origins date back to the first century. In 1438, the Incas were just beginning to consolidate, but before the arrival of the legendary founders of their empire, Manco Cápac and Mama Ocllo, who inhabited the territory that would later be known as Peru? What foods did its inhabitants consume? To understand the history of the diet of the natives, derived from their fishing activities, we can refer to information found in some ceramic pieces from the cultures that flourished in the north and south of Peru starting in the first century, approximately 14 centuries before the existence of the Tahuantinsuyo. [15, p. 24].

These are terracotta objects produced by contemporary cultures that are approximately two thousand years old, corresponding to the beginnings of the Christian era. These ceramic pieces were created by the Moche and Nazca cultures during their dominance in this part of the world. In these everyday utensils, made from clay, they were able to depict images of fresh fish and other native ingredients, representing a dish that, after the arrival of the conquerors, began to be referred to as sevirche, sebiche, cebiche, and sevirche—four different ways of spelling it that appear in various ancient publications, both national and foreign. [15, p. 24].

In these ancient clay dishes, on the bottom where food is arranged for diners, ceviche was clearly represented through vibrant images created by the potters of the Ica and Nazca civilizations. The artistic legacy of these Peruvian cultures is preserved in various collections abroad. These pieces take the form of polychrome clay trays in which, with great artistic skill, the descendants of the Ica and Nazca cultures illustrated fish, chilli peppers, and other ingredients used in the preparation of this ancestral Peruvian dish. This preparation also included the nearly extinct crustacean known as “muy muy”, which, until about a decade ago, could be found in abundance in the sands of the Peruvian coasts and was collected by the underprivileged population to make ceviche. [15, p. 25].

Moreover, the practice of combining products to create new flavours indicates that the ancient inhabitants of Peru managed to adapt their environment with a high degree of sophistication. Before establishing their own agriculture, these inhabitants engaged in horticulture around 9000 BC in regions of northern and southern Peru. Since the fifteenth century, Inca civilizations have left evidence of their interest in fishing. In this context, the first writings from the Libro Becerro are recorded in 1533, documenting various fishing practices throughout the history of Peru, as well as the individuals who promoted this activity and the ingredients deemed suitable for preparing the country's iconic dish. [15].



Fig. 1 **A** Flat plates of polychrome clay skilfully made by the descendants of the Ica and Nazca cultures, representing essential ingredients of ceviche, such as fish and chilli peppers. **B** Fragment of a tray with fish and crustaceans visualising the pre-Hispanic culinary tradition, capturing the essence of indigenous foods

These works of art, (Fig. 1), crafted from polychrome clay and moulded with remarkable skill, take the form of trays where the descendants of the ancient Ica and Nazca cultures masterfully depicted representations of fish, chilli peppers, and other essential ingredients that made up ceviche, an ancestral dish of Peru. These trays not only served as utensils but also visually narrated the rich pre-Hispanic culinary tradition, capturing the essence of the native foods that defined the region's gastronomy long before the arrival of foreign influences. The detailed ornamentation of these pieces reflects not only the technical skill of their creators but also their deep respect for the natural resources that brought this iconic preparation to life [15].

In summary, ceviche, an iconic Peruvian dish, has its roots deeply intertwined with ancient civilizations that inhabited the region over two thousand years ago. This is evidenced by ceramic representations from that time, where trays depict whole fish alongside the ingredients used for its preparation. These remains suggest that, as early as the first century, the first versions of this dish existed, reinforcing its ancestral legacy and its evolution into a symbol of Peru's national gastronomy. In other words, ceviche is Peruvian, it has its origins in Peru [15].

In these pre-Inca trays, the detailed images depict a fish-based dish and other ingredients that reflect the advanced culinary art developed by the ancient Peruvians, who knew how to make the most of the fruits

that nature offered for their sustenance and enjoyment. Among the native fruits represented in this marine dish are the monk's plum (*Bunchosia armeniaca*) and the aguaymanto (*Physalis peruviana*). With their vibrant red and yellow colours, both fruits, known for their sweet-and-sour flavour, were used by the ancient Peruvians to enhance the taste of their meals. This practice reveals the deep-rooted ancestral preference of Peruvians for combining and savouring contrasting flavours. Their inclination to fuse different products to create new and complex taste experiences demonstrates that the early inhabitants of Peru achieved remarkable mastery and sophistication in adapting to and domesticating their natural environment. This ability to harmonise opposing flavours not only highlights their culinary ingenuity but also their profound understanding of available resources, elevating gastronomy to an art form that integrated diversity into a rich and balanced cultural expression. [15] (Fig. 2).

Categories of Peruvian ceviche: an analytical perspective

The present research was distributed in an analytical perspective of categories of Peruvian ceviche. Firstly, the cultural identity of the Peruvian ceviche is shown.

Cultural identity can be understood as the way a person perceives themselves in relation to various cultural communities. This process involves adopting a particular worldview and engaging in practices that



Fig. 2 Ancient Peruvians developed a sophisticated culinary art by taking advantage of natural resources, such as the fraile plum and aguaymanto, which they used to enhance their dishes. The combination of marine and agricultural flavours reflects their ability to fuse ingredients and create complex taste experiences

connect individuals to a specific society. [16]. On the other hand, [17] refer to cultural identity as the adoption of a worldview and the practices that connect individuals within a community. This cultural perspective encompasses an understanding of human nature, the relationship between the individual and society, as well as moral and religious values. Cultural beliefs are transmitted from generation to generation through everyday activities such as work, play, and food, as well as through significant rites of passage, such as graduations, marriages, and procreation. Cultural identity includes a wide variety of beliefs and practices, encompassing fundamental aspects that are essential for the formation of a person's identity.

Secondly, there is national identity, is characterised as a relatively recent construct that has solidified as a fundamental identity for broad sectors of the population. In other words, national identity becomes an essential element, as, with the creation of modern nation-states, identity became a matter of state. Governments became administrators of identity, establishing regulations and controls to promote a singular identity that would serve as a cultural reference within a given territory. While states may allow certain specific identities, such as community or regional identities, these must coexist without threatening the dominant national identity. Thus, national identity is a contemporary construct that develops within the context of nation-states, playing a crucial role in social cohesion and cultural regulation within a defined territory. [18].

In this sense, in Peru, Peruvian cuisine has been a fundamental pillar in the construction of national identity, acting as a reference that unites Peruvians. Today, the country's gastronomy is promoted as a symbol reflecting the rich cultural diversity of Peru, seeking to generate a sense of belonging among people from all regions and social strata. This phenomenon has reached an unprecedented level of recognition, where interest in cuisine goes beyond recipes and techniques, encompassing its symbolism and significance for collective identity. [7].

Thirdly, there is the gastronomic identity. Gastronomic identity is forged through the flavours, aromas, and combinations we create when preparing and enjoying food, generating deep social and symbolic bonds. This identity is not only linked to the biological necessity of nourishment but also to the cultural dimension that helps define who we are and what our symbols mean in a social context. In a globalised world, where information flows rapidly, gastronomic identity is a constantly evolving discourse that reflects and confronts our social relationships, functioning as a language that expresses our identity and concept of good taste. [19].

Fourthly, we have the collective memory. According to sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, collective memory is a reconstruction of the past that occurs in the present, imbued with meaning. Our memories remain collective because it is others who remind us of them; when we remember with others, memory is inherently shared. Halbwachs also defines memory as a series of socially constructed structures or "frames," such as time

and space, that cause memories to emerge collectively because we belong to a particular social group.

In this sense, within the context of Peruvian gastronomy, collective memory manifests in the intergenerational transmission of recipes, culinary techniques, and meanings associated with food. Iconic dishes like ceviche, which combine local ingredients with foreign influences, reflect Peru's shared history and cultural identity. By preparing and consuming these foods, individuals evoke memories, strengthen social ties, and reaffirm their belonging to a community. Additionally, collective memory is expressed in the narratives surrounding Peruvian cuisine, such as the celebration of regional diversity and the inclusion of multiple culinary traditions. These shared stories contribute to the construction of a national identity that is expressed through food. As dishes like ceviche gain international recognition, they become symbols that allow Peruvians to remember and reclaim their past, present, and future as a nation. [1, 7, 20].

The fifth category is emotional meaning. The concept of emotional significance refers to how emotions influence eating behaviour, affecting everything from the motivation to eat to food choices and the manner of consumption. Emotions are complex phenomena involving neural and chemical interactions, and their impact on eating behaviour is difficult to predict due to the variability of emotions, which can depend on their valence (pleasant or negative), arousal (high or low), and intensity (short or long-lasting). Additionally, emotional responses are also influenced by individual factors, such as health status and the ability to regulate emotions in relation to eating. [21].

In the context of Peruvian gastronomy, emotional significance manifests in the joy and pride that Peruvians feel for the international recognition their cuisine has received, especially regarding ceviche. This iconic dish is not only appreciated for its flavour but also represents the cultural identity and diversity of Peru. Each time a prize or recognition is awarded to Peruvian gastronomy, it generates a sense of unity and belonging among Peruvians, reinforcing the emotional connection they have with their culinary culture [2].

The sixth category is social dynamics. It is an ongoing process of constructing and reconstructing reality, where human interactions play a fundamental role. Ethnomethodology reveals that social order is not a fixed structure but rather a product of the actions and meanings that individuals attribute to their everyday experiences. Through their practices and conversations, individuals constantly create and recreate the norms, values, and relationships that shape society. [22].

The seventh category is economic dynamics. They are the transformations and intentional changes that occur in

the economy in response to the challenges of a constantly evolving society. These dynamics are characterised by the creation of new practices and discourses aimed at contributing to a sustainable economy, integrating scientific knowledge and ancestral wisdom. Reflection on culture, climate change, and social commitment are fundamental aspects accompanying economic growth, proposing a socio-relational model that considers not only human capital but also relational and structural capital to drive the social and productive development of populations. [23].

Finally, we have the category of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The concept of intangible cultural heritage, according to UNESCO, refers to the living traditions and expressions inherited from our ancestors and transmitted to future generations. This includes practices such as oral traditions, performing arts, social uses, rituals, festivities, knowledge of nature, and craftsmanship techniques. Unlike tangible cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage is fragile and relies on the transmission and recognition by the communities that create and maintain it. This type of heritage is essential for cultural diversity in a globalised world, as it fosters dialogue between cultures and respect for different ways of life. Its value lies not only in the cultural manifestations themselves but also in the body of knowledge and techniques passed down from generation to generation, contributing to social cohesion and a sense of identity within communities. [3].

The Peruvian ceviche is not just food; it is a reflection of the intricate relationship between biology and culture in human existence. Since its origin, this dish has transcended its basic function of sustenance to become a deeply rooted cultural symbol of Peruvian identity. The biological need to eat transforms into a social and communal experience, where the act of consuming ceviche becomes a shared ritual filled with symbolic meanings.

Through the preparation and consumption of ceviche, Peruvians not only satisfy their physical needs but also reaffirm their collective identity, using elements of nature like fish, chilli peppers, and lime—ingredients that have been culturally reinterpreted and adapted over time. Thus, ceviche becomes a means of symbolic communication that unites the community, preserving and transmitting a rich cultural heritage that defines how Peruvians understand and experience their world. [24].

On the other hand, gastronomy, and particularly Peruvian ceviche, serves as a fundamental stage for understanding the processes of cultural and social formation. Through this emblematic dish, not only the dynamics of production and consumption are revealed, but also the social identities that emerge and consolidate around it. Ceviche, as a central part of Peruvian cuisine, transcends

its culinary role to become a symbol that reflects the distinctions and social formations in various contexts. Each preparation and consumption of ceviche not only nourishes the body but also strengthens cultural and community connections, acting as a vehicle of identity that unites Peruvians around a shared tradition. [25].

Peruvian ceviche is one of the most representative culinary preparations of Peruvian gastronomy, recognised not only for its freshness and unique flavour, but also for its nutritional benefits. Being a preparation with low energy density, it is ideal to include in a balanced diet, favouring its consumption in people with a normal state of health and those looking for light but nutritious options. Composed mainly of fresh fish marinated in lime juice, accompanied by onion, chilli and coriander, it is an excellent source of high quality proteins, essential for the regeneration and maintenance of tissues. In addition, its low fat content makes it suitable for people who wish to control their calorie intake without sacrificing taste. Due to its balance between proteins, carbohydrates and low fat content, ceviche is a versatile option to enjoy as a main dish or starter, perfectly complementing other dishes in a meal (Figs. 3 and 4).

Nutritional Composition: Energy: 234 kcal, Protein: 16.5 g; Fat: 3.25 g; Carbohydrate: 34 g (Table 1).

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive–interpretative methodology based on the ethnomethodological paradigm, aimed at exploring and understanding the cultural meaning of Peruvian ceviche, an emblematic dish and symbol of national identity. In this sense, qualitative research transcends simple description by focussing on the in-depth exploration of the meaning and relevance of a phenomenon, considering the perspectives of the

individuals involved, their interactions and beliefs, as well as the meaning of their experiences. Through methods such as interviews, focus groups and observations, researchers establish meaningful dialogues that allow participants to share their narratives and worldviews. [26].

Ethnomethodology immerses us in the microsociology of everyday life, exploring how individuals actively construct meanings through their real-time interactions. By focussing on discursive and non-verbal practices, this perspective allows us to uncover the implicit meanings that underlie everyday actions. This approach focuses on how people negotiate, interpret and make sense of social situations as they occur, thus revealing the complex dynamics that shape our social reality. [27].

To this end, an exhaustive collection and analysis of resources from a variety of sources was carried out. These included academic articles obtained from specialised databases, printed books addressing the history and evolution of Peruvian cuisine, government agency platforms, with a particular focus on those of the Ministry of Culture, and a review of publications in national and international newspapers, complemented by press releases. Additionally, a content analysis of YouTube videos documenting the meaning, preparation, consumption and symbolism of ceviche in Peruvian identity was integrated. At the same time, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key participants, such as chefs, historians and diners, in order to capture their perceptions and experiences. This methodological strategy allowed us not only to organise the resources obtained, but also to contextualise ceviche in a cultural and social framework, revealing its multiple meanings and its role in the preservation of Peruvian identity.

For this research, the authors developed an a priori guide with semi-structured questions in order to collect information from the participants in an open and participatory manner that allows for a fluid dialogue with additional information that may arise from the initial conversation established. Likewise, the idiosyncrasy of the Peruvian population demands the adaptation of semi-structured interviews to a more experiential level with open dialogue. In that sense, semi-structured interviews begin when the interviewee narrates their experiences and knowledge, which are understood as subjective theories of an investigative construct, serving as a framework to capture the richness and complexity of the informants [28, 31].

This study was conducted during the months of August and September 2024. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two academic historians, four restaurant entrepreneurs (including top, emblematic and traditional establishments), two ceviche aficionados, two chefs who



Fig. 3 Peruvian ceviche dish today

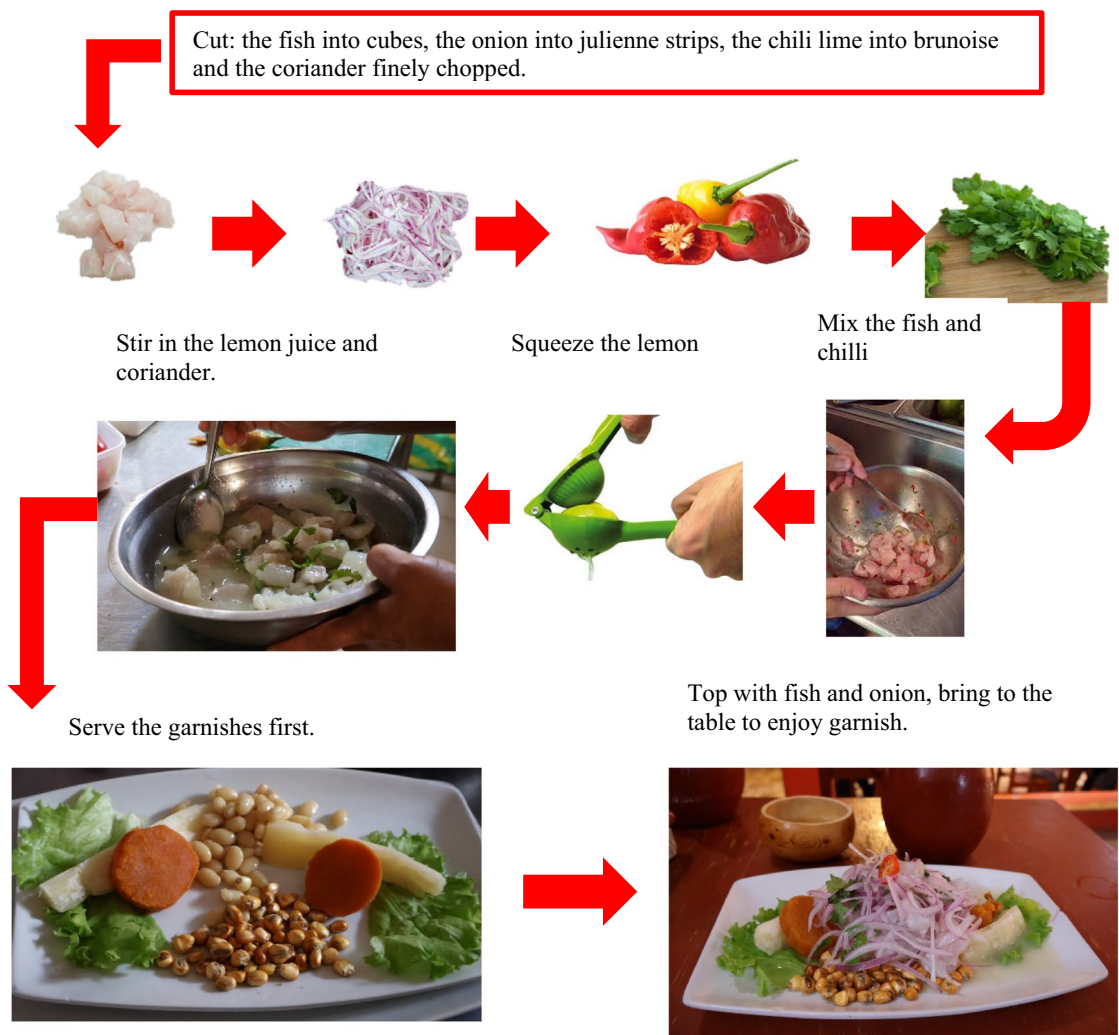


Fig. 4 Flowchart of the preparation of Peruvian ceviche

prepare ceviche daily in their workplaces and two tourists who have tried ceviche and have become regular consumers of Peruvian ceviche. Finally, a nutritionist

Table 1 Nutritional content of Peruvian ceviche

Food	Quantity	Home measurement
Yellow sweet potato	70 g	1/2 small unit
Beautiful sin	60 g	2/3 fillet
Corn	60 g	1/3 piece
Red onion	30 g	2 tablespoons
Lemon (juice)	30 g	3 units
Lettuce	1 g	1 sheet
Lime chilli	1 g	1 unit
Coriander	1 g	1 branch
Salt	1 g	¼ teaspoon

was interviewed to discuss the caloric intake of Peruvian ceviche.

In this context, the information collected was analysed using Atlas Ti software, allowing for a triangulation of the data in the most scientific way possible. The analysis of the data obtained through the semi-structured interviews focussed on several key categories that emerge as fundamental pillars for understanding the complexity and meaning of Peruvian ceviche. Firstly, the history of the ceviche, its relationship with national and gastronomic identity, collective memory, as well as its social and economic dynamics were explored, also considering its recognition as intangible cultural heritage of humanity.

To this end, interviews were arranged through telephone calls, e-mails and face-to-face meetings with people living in Lima, as well as in provinces in the north, highlands and jungle. The aim was to obtain a homogeneous sample from different regions of Peru, as ceviche is

a nationally emblematic dish. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in the workplaces of chefs and restaurant owners, in the universities where the historians work, in the homes of ceviche aficionados and in the restaurants where tourists consumed ceviche.

This allowed for observing the context in which the interviewees operate and providing additional information about their perceptions and experiences with the ceviche. Additionally, traditional ceviche recipes were collected from three restaurants located in Piura (northern Peru), Cusco (southern highlands of Peru), and Lima, in order to explore their variations and common elements at the national level. Which allowed us to learn about the preparation processes and the ingredients used in these three regions. The nutritionist was interviewed in his office, where he was able to provide detailed information on the nutritional value of ceviche, its caloric intake and health benefits. The nutritional compositions of key ingredients such as fish, lime, onion and chilli were analysed.

Finally, a triangulation of the information gathered through interviews, observations and documentary analysis of the recipes was carried out. This provided a global view of ceviche as an iconic Peruvian dish, including its history, preparation, consumption and nutritional value.

The interviews were conducted in person, which facilitated the creation of a trusting environment and allowed for the observation of body language and facial expressions that complemented verbal information. Each interview was digitally recorded using high quality audio devices, with the informed consent of the participants. This ensured the accuracy of the information collected and allowed the researcher to concentrate fully on the dialogue without distraction [29].

Once the interviews were completed, the audio was transcribed into documents/texts that could be extensively examined. The text resulting from the transcription was imported into the ATLAS.ti software, which is suitable for computer-assisted qualitative analysis. This program helped structure the data into categories, subcategories, and codes according to the defined themes, as well as conduct in-depth searches to determine correlations and trends. Such detailed research or contrasting or confirming the transcribed data with various data sources: interviews, observations, and document analysis, allowed for triangulated final results. The categories and subcategories that emerged during the coding of the material formed the basis for drafting the report and preparing its conclusions.

This research, focussed on Peruvian ceviche, adhered to fundamental ethical principles to ensure the respect and protection of participants. Firstly, Research Approval Letter No. 048–2024-CIEI-UPN was obtained, approving

the research protocol, and informed consent was secured from all interviewees. The study's objectives, how the collected information would be used, and the participants' right to withdraw at any time without repercussions were clearly explained. This consent was properly documented to ensure transparency throughout the process.

Furthermore, the confidentiality of participants' personal data was protected, ensuring anonymity in all transcriptions and analyses. This means that any information that could identify participants was removed or altered, safeguarding their privacy and fostering an environment of trust that encouraged honest and open expression during the interviews.

Cultural sensitivity related to ceviche, an emblematic dish of Peruvian identity, was also considered. Therefore, the topic was approached with a respectful and culturally relevant perspective, recognising the diversity of opinions and experiences surrounding this dish. Additionally, equity in the selection of participants was promoted, ensuring that diverse voices, from historians to consumers, were heard to reflect the richness of Peru's culinary heritage.

Results

Socio-cultural significance of ceviche and its impact on Peruvian identity

Ceviche, more than a culinary preparation, is a deeply rooted symbol of Peruvian identity, representing the rich cultural diversity of the country. According to the participants in the research, ceviche is present in the daily lives of Peruvians as a dish that evokes nostalgia and pride, especially for those who have emigrated. This dish is not only a central element of national cuisine but also serves as a “diplomatic passport”, facilitating connections and conversations abroad. The assertion that “ceviche opens doors to job opportunities” highlights its importance not only as food but also as an emblem of Peruvian culture that brings people together. In that sense of ideas, the exploration of the interactions between diplomacy and gastronomy has transcended towards a more significant approach that goes beyond traditional disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and political science. Therefore, Peruvian ceviche is established as a cultural symbol that represents national identity and the shared values of an entire people through a set of social practices, feelings, pride, meanings, and knowledge passed down through the ages.

From a historical perspective, ceviche has roots that trace back more than 2,000 years, with evidence of its consumption in various regions of Peru, from the coast to the highlands and the jungle. Participants noted that “ceviche was eaten both in the north and the south”, emphasising its inclusive and democratic nature. This

dish not only reflects the richness of Peru's marine and agricultural resources, but also serves as a symbol of social cohesion, often enjoyed during celebrations and family gatherings. The phrase "ceviche is happiness" encapsulates its role as a facilitator of socialisation and festivity, making it an essential element in the daily life of Peruvians. Furthermore, ceviche stands as a vehicle for cultural expression and national identity.

Moreover, in the words of the participants, "ceviche is a heritage", recognised by UNESCO, and is considered a national symbol that, although not represented on the flag, is "in the blood of every Peruvian". This food reflects the cultural diversity of the country, where each region contributes its ingredients and techniques, creating variations that enrich the culinary experience. The ability of ceviche to adapt and evolve over time while maintaining its essence is a testament to its significance in Peruvian identity, uniting people around a dish that has been enjoyed for many generations.

In the same way, another participant indicates that, since his childhood, he has been marked by the intense flavours of black shell ceviche, and he has developed a deep connection with this dish. For him, ceviche transcends simple food and becomes a symbol of Peruvian identity, unifying diverse regions and cultures. With each bite, he relives the passion of his grandfather from Tumbes and the warmth of his family from Ayacucho. Ceviche is more than a dish; it is a legacy, a tradition, and an expression of national pride. For him, preparing ceviche is an act of love and respect for his culture, and sharing it is a way to connect with others and celebrate Peru's culinary richness.

On the other hand, ceviche has also become a business opportunity for many Peruvian entrepreneurs. As one participant mentions, he and his brother learned to prepare ceviche out of economic necessity, not as a "vacation moment". Ceviche is a very accessible dish that doesn't require large capital investments or specialised studies to produce; it only requires fish, lemon, chilli, and some basic utensils. This has enabled many people to generate income through the sale of ceviche, whether in restaurants, markets, or even from their own homes. The evolution in preparation techniques, such as cold chain management, has also contributed to the expansion of the ceviche business, allowing for better preservation of fish and improved quality of the final product. In summary, ceviche has proven to be a vehicle for entrepreneurship and economic sustenance for many Peruvian families.

It should be added that Piura, a region that supplies the entire country with lemons, chilies, sweet potatoes, zarandaja, and seafood, has ceviche de caballa as a true reflection of its cultural identity. With a rich

history and unmistakable flavour, the artisanal fishing of mackerel in Sechura, using ancestral techniques such as line fishing, guarantees the freshness and quality of the main ingredient. This ancestral knowledge, passed down from generation to generation, has made ceviche de caballa a symbol of Piuran cuisine and a national pride. The traditional preparation, with lemon, onion, and cilantro, has withstood the test of time and has become a hallmark of identity for the people of Piura, who have consumed it for centuries. By preserving these culinary traditions, we highlight the importance of valuing and protecting our cultural and gastronomic heritage.

In this research, an inductive–deductive approach was employed to establish the categories of analysis. Initially, relevant categories were identified through a review of existing literature exploring the socio-cultural significance of ceviche and its impact on Peruvian identity. However, it was through a detailed analysis of the interview transcripts that new categories and subcategories emerged. This iterative process allowed for the continuous refinement of the theoretical framework, ensuring that the categories accurately reflected the lived experiences of participants within the context of their passion.

Moreover, through open and selective coding, a system of categories was developed that allowed for an in-depth understanding of the phenomena surrounding Peruvian ceviche. In other words, the codes, when grouped and organised, form categories that encapsulate a wide range of meanings related to situations, actions, interactions, perspectives, and emotions. This categorization process, fundamental in qualitative research, enables the synthesis of information and reveals underlying patterns in the data. The categories, in addition to being the result of rigorous analysis, are dynamic entities that can evolve as the understanding of the studied phenomena deepens.[30].

Next, a conceptual geographical map is presented based on the information collected from participants, who assert that in the north of the country, specifically Piura, the city has always maintained the tradition of ceviche since ancient times. With the arrival of the Spaniards, who brought lemons and onions, these foods were incorporated into ceviche. Notably, the emergence of the unique variety of Peruvian lime, cultivated in Piura's lands, is characterised by its acidity, which complements the classic flavour of Peruvian ceviche.

Piura, with its privileged geographical location and rich marine biodiversity, has provided the essential elements for the preservation of this emblematic preparation. The combination of fresh fish such as flounder, grouper, mackerel, and bonito, along with chilli peppers, limes, sweet potatoes, and zarandaja, has led to a myriad of recipes that cater to even the most discerning tastes (Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 Peruvian ceviche, an ancestral legacy that has united the entire country, found its roots in the city of Piura during the conquest, which kept this culinary tradition alive, passing it down from generation to generation. It was from Piura that ceviche made with fish, lemon, onion, cilantro, and salt spread along the Peruvian coast, promoting the cultivation of key ingredients such as lemon, chilli peppers, sweet potatoes, and seafood, which have always been grown and harvested there. Today, thanks to this rich heritage, ceviche is prepared in all regions of the country, strengthening our gastronomic identity.

The following is the matrix of categories and subcategories (Table 2) developed in this research on ceviche, based on the interviews conducted with the participants. This structural scheme organises the data collected, allowing for an in-depth analysis of the perceptions and meanings associated with ceviche in Peruvian culture. Through this matrix, the identification of patterns and recurring themes is facilitated, reflecting the richness and diversity of opinions about Peruvian ceviche as part of

Peruvian culture. Peruvian ceviche is exquisite, delicious and nutritious. It is consumed in all settings of Peruvian society and is a symbol of national identity.

Discussion

This research aimed to explore the socio-cultural significance of ceviche and its impact on Peruvian identity, examining its uses and customs, as well as the way in which its unique flavours are preserved. Furthermore,

Table 2 System of categories and subcategories for the analysis of Peruvian ceviche: Organisation and emerging patterns

Categories	Subcategories
National Identity Peruvian ceviche is a key symbol of national identity, alongside patriotic emblems such as the flag and the coat of arms and is considered part of the cultural practice of Peruvians. It represents Peruvianness, uniting its inhabitants without geographical or social distinction. Moreover, it has played a prominent role in projecting Peru on a global scale, reinforcing national pride and its recognition as an intangible cultural heritage. Its evolution over time has consolidated its importance in Peruvian identity	Symbol of national pride International recognition Cultural heritage of Peru Patriotic identity
Culinary Culture Peruvian ceviche is an iconic dish known for its authenticity and widespread presence throughout the country. It reflects Peru's agricultural and fishing wealth, with regional variations that adapt the preparation to local ingredients while maintaining its essence and showcasing diversity	Regional adaptations External influences (Japanese) Gourmet adaptations Preparation techniques Cold chain
Collective Memory Ceviche is deeply rooted in the collective memory of Peruvians, passed down through generations and evoking strong emotional and familial ties. It is a central dish in culinary tradition, present at events and celebrations, thus becoming a marker of cultural memory. Festivities such as Ceviche Day reinforce its significance and encourage participation	Transmisión de recetas familiares Celebraciones y festividades asociadas (Día del ceviche) Mitos y leyendas
Emotional Significance Ceviche satisfies hunger and is imbued with emotions such as pride, passion, and nostalgia. It is present at significant moments in life, evoking feelings of joy and connection both in Peru and abroad, being an essential part of shared experiences and celebrations	Family and social connection at events Pleasure and satisfaction when consuming ceviche
Social Dynamics Ceviche is a central element in Peruvian social life, present at celebrations and important events, where it fosters interaction and symbolises unity. It plays a starring role in family and community gatherings, representing values such as affection, friendship, and hospitality, thus establishing itself as a symbol of social cohesion on significant occasions	Presence at celebrations (marriages, birthdays) Shared meals at community events
Economic Dynamics Ceviche has a significant economic impact in Peru, especially along the coast, energising sectors such as fishing, agriculture, restaurant services, and tourism. It generates employment and economic opportunities for families, from fishermen to restaurants, with the demand for fresh ingredients serving as a driving force for the economy	Generates employment Impact on local economy National food movements
Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity The designation of ceviche as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has reinforced its cultural importance and generated greater responsibility for its preservation. This status has promoted its valuation, emphasising quality and authenticity, and has encouraged the preservation of traditional techniques. Additionally, it has highlighted its relevance in Peruvian cuisine on an international level, fostering a sense of pride	Recognition by UNESCO Importance in Peruvian culture and its international promotion Impact abroad with greater relevance

its relevance in the local economy and its contribution to social cohesion were analysed. In this sense, the research reveals a robust history that is intertwined with the evolution of pre-Inca and Inca cultures and culinary traditions over the centuries. By analysing the studies of Duarte [12], Moro [13], UNESCO [3] and Guardia [14], it is evident that ceviche, like other heritage foods such as the Mediterranean diet, dolma and tereré, transcends its culinary dimension to become a symbol of cultural identity, social cohesion and collective memory.

Duarte's literature review [12] establishes an interesting connection between ceviche and Persian sikbaj, suggesting a possible influence on the evolution of the dish. However, it is essential to note that Peruvian ceviche has

developed its own identity over the centuries, with evidence in earthenware pots and adapting to local ingredients and Peruvian culinary customs. The archaeological evidence presented by Sifuentes [15] corroborates this claim, demonstrating that ceviche was already being consumed in Peru long before the arrival of the Spanish.

The inclusion of Peruvian ceviche on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, like other heritage foods such as the Mediterranean diet and dolma, highlights the importance of preserving these culinary traditions as an integral part of the cultural identity of communities. Like the Mediterranean diet, ceviche is a reflection of a way of life, a set of knowledge and practices passed down from generation to generation.

Each community has a particular way of preparing its recipes, and these are created according to its food history, the products available and its habits and customs that are passed on from generation to generation. In addition, the combination of factors such as climate, soil types and agriculture in each region greatly diversifies the style of eating [32]. In the current context, Peruvian ceviche easily stands out for its originality, whether within its borders or globally. In several nations, such as Ecuador, Colombia, Chile and Mexico, they are also called 'ceviche'; however, these dishes reflect the availability of resources and the cultural framework that accompanies them.

For example, it is suggested that Ecuadorian ceviche [12] will continue to evolve and new and interesting variants of the dish will appear. However, it is worth mentioning that Peruvian ceviche is not an immutable and unalterable recipe; on the contrary, its evolution, resulting from the biodiversity of its ingredients and the innovation of culinary techniques, ensures its relevance as a leading dish in today's gastronomy.

The above shows how a single dish can harbour different representations from the perspective of the culture attributed to it. The fact that Peruvian ceviche has been included in UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity proves its historical and cultural importance. This also represents a step forward for the recognition of culinary traditions as an integral part of the cultural heritage of any nation in the world. However, the negativity of the opponents of this achievement clearly reinforces Peru's position as a culinary reference and deepens the determination to safeguard and transmit this cultural legacy.

When comparing Peruvian ceviche with other heritage dishes, it can be seen that they all share common characteristics: 1) Ancestral roots: The origins of ceviche go back thousands of years, as do the Mediterranean diet and the *dolma*; 2) Cultural identity: These dishes are symbols of cultural identity and social cohesion, transmitting values and traditions from generation to generation; 3) Nutritional value: In addition to their cultural value, these foods offer important nutritional benefits; and 4) International recognition: UNESCO has recognised the value of these dishes, granting them the status of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Conclusion

Peruvian ceviche, an ancestral culinary legacy received from the great cultures of Peru. Its roots were established in the ancient coastal civilisations of Peru, where fishermen and gatherers developed a deep connection with the products of the sea and the land. Archaeological evidence and historical chronicles corroborate its

pre-Hispanic origin, with the Ica and Nazca cultures having the first depictions of this delicacy on their ceramics. Over the centuries, Peruvian ceviche has evolved, enriched by cultural influences and adapted to different regional contexts. Today, it is a symbol of national identity, a historical legacy, an opportunity to generate resources and an expression of Peruvian culinary creativity. Its democratic and unifying character should be further emphasised, as it is a dish that can be enjoyed by people of all social strata, races, cultural origins and geographical locations.

Ceviche is a cohesive element that transcends differences and unites Peruvians around a shared culinary tradition. Its recognition as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO underlines its importance as a symbol of national identity, passed down from generation to generation. Ceviche is, in essence, an expression of Peruvian cultural diversity, a bridge between the past and the present, and a testimony to the ingenuity and creativity of a people who have preserved their culinary traditions. For this reason, all Peruvians must continue to join forces to preserve the ancestral and present knowledge of Peruvian ceviche, in order to continue the legacy of passing it on to current generations and to emphasise that this transmission must be continued for generations to come.

Consequently, archaeological, historical, and cultural evidence confirms that ceviche is a dish deeply rooted in the millennia-old traditions of Peru. Remnants of fishing nets, representations of the ingredients in ceramic pieces from cultures such as the Moche, Ica, and Nazca, and the accounts of chroniclers from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are clear testimonies that this dish has been part of the daily life of the Peruvian coast for more than two thousand years. The marine richness of the entire coast, the biodiversity of the territory, and the ancestral knowledge of the ancestral and native communities, passed down from generation to generation, have contributed to the development and perfection of the ceviche as a culinary symbol of the country. These findings strongly reinforce that ceviche is an authentically Peruvian cultural and gastronomic heritage, consolidating its place in the history of Peru and the world. Peruvian ceviche has been, is, and will always be present on the tables of Peruvians.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the eight interviewees for their kindness and cooperation. A special thank you to the constant support of the Universidad Privada del Norte.

Author contributions

Joaquín Aguirre-Sosa contributed to writing the original draft, conceptualisation, methodology, revision and editing and validation. María Luisa Dextre contributed to conceptualisation, resources, supervision, validation, and

visualisation. Jorge Alberto Vargas-Merino contributed to conceptualisation, formal analysis, review and editing, and validation.

Funding

The authors have not received specific funding for this work.

Availability of data and materials

Data are available upon coordination with the authors.

Declarations

Ethical approval and consent to participate

Research Approval Letter No. 048–2024-CIEI-UPN, approving the research protocol, was obtained, and informed consent was obtained from all interviewees.

Consent for publication

Yes.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Received: 26 September 2024 Accepted: 19 February 2025

Published: 4 April 2025

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